

R.I. ADVISORY COMMISSION ON HISTORICAL CEMETERIES

Minutes/Work Session

Oct. 24, 2007

Old State House, Providence

Present

Chairwoman Evelyn Wheeler called the work session to order at 6:40 p.m. Other Commissioners present were Roger Beaudry, Robert Butler (RI League of Cities and Towns), Daniel Evangelista (Veterans Affairs), Judith Fardig, Edna Kent, Margaret “Pegee” Malcolm, Paul Robinson (RIHPC), and Sally Small. Bruce Frail, grant consultant, was also present.

Discussions

A discussion was held on the possibility of requesting that each city or town or local historical society contribute \$425 each that would be used for a statewide data base benefiting each city and town. The data base would lead to cemetery improvement through graves registration, cemetery documentation, etc. Edna Kent will draft a letter for discussion at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

Chairwoman Wheeler mentioned that the Commission is proceeding with an application for a grant from Preserve Rhode Island, administered through Citizens Bank. Chairwoman Wheeler said such grants are matching and usually total \$300 to \$1,000.

Bruce Frail submitted a four-page report to Commission members on plans of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War/Department of Rhode Island to restore the St. James/Bernon Cemetery in Woonsocket. Mr. Frail, who serves as graves registration officer and project manager for the SUVCW/Dept. of Rhode Island's Graves Registration Committee, discussed the report in detail. He estimated the total restoration cost at \$139,491 for the 2+-acre cemetery, which had 232 internments, including Henry C. Davis, 17, the first Rhode Island soldier to die in the Civil War.

Chairwoman Wheeler announced that Ron Onorato of Newport has resigned from the Commission.

Chairwoman Wheeler, at the urging of the Commission, will discuss with the state Representatives who filed the bill setting up the Commission the possibility of adding up to four (4) members to the Commission from Providence County. The additional members will be of help with the large amount of historic cemeteries in Providence County. She will also ask the Representatives about the possibility of amending the law creating the Commission to allow for staggered terms and longer terms for members.

(2)

Chairwoman Wheeler discussed a suggestion from the Attorney

General's Office that the Commission adopt rules and regulations. Among the suggestions discussed by Commission members were: having a quorum equal fifty (50) percent of Commission members, plus one (1); and for the removal of any Commissioner who misses four (4) consecutive meetings.

Daniel Evangleista discussed Rhode Island Public Law 30-25-12 that calls on the General Assembly to appropriate money from time to time to care for the neglected graves of veterans. He said there might be the possibility of obtaining money for the clearing of graves and their surroundings through the law. He said he will try to determine the last time money was appropriated for such purposes, if ever, and whether money is still in that account, if ever appropriated.

Pegee Malcolm asked about the possibility of obtaining a sign for State Institutional Cemetery #2, where internments are being re-buried. Mr. Evangelista said he would find out.

Adjournment

The work session was adjourned at 8:40 p.m. on a motion by Judith Fardig and a second by Daniel Evangelista.

Next Meeting

The Commission will meet on Nov. 28 at the Buttonwoods Senior Center, West Shore Road, Warwick. The Commissioners will meet in

public from 6:30 to 7 p.m.

An executive session will be held at 7 p.m. An open forum session will begin at 7:30 p.m.